

February 19, 2021

VIA ECF ONLY

Honorable David M. Lawson
United States District Judge
Theodore Levin United States Courthouse
231 W. Lafayette Blvd., Room 775
Detroit, MI 48226

Re: *United States of America v. James Letko, et al.*
Case No. 2:19-CR-20652-DML-DRG

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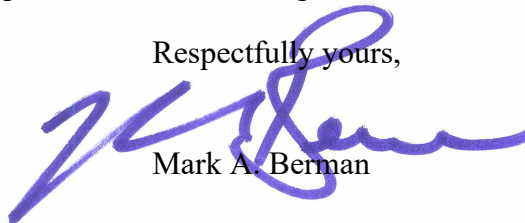
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Dear Judge Lawson:

This firm represents Defendant Katherine Peterson. Today when I went to calendar the new September 14, 2021 trial date set by the Court at last week's status conference, I realized that September 16, 2021 is Yom Kippur and that September 21, 2021 and September 28, 2021, are the first and last days of the combined eight-day Jewish holidays of Sukkot/Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah.¹ For reasons of religious observance, I do not and have never worked on those days. Although Defendant Peterson's motion for a severance remains pending and, given the uncertainties of today's world, it may be that trial does not commence on September 14, 2021 anyway, I wanted to alert the Court to this personal scheduling conundrum and request the Court's accommodation in the event trial does proceed as scheduled. In that regard, although all Jewish holidays commence at sundown the evening before, my intention would be to stay in Detroit – and not to return to be with family in New Jersey – to minimize the additional disruption to the Court's calendar that would be caused by my traveling to/from New Jersey prior to the holidays themselves. I apologize for not picking up on this conflict during our status conference call.

Respectfully yours,



Mark A. Berman

cc: All Counsel of Record (via ECF)

¹ For archaic reasons, the combined holiday actually is nine-days long outside of Israel, with the first and last two days of the holiday being observed with the same restrictions associated with the Sabbath, including a prohibition on work. In Israel, the combined holidays are one day shorter and the prohibition on work is observed only on the first day and last day of the holiday. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_tov_sheni_shel_galuyot#:~:text=Nevertheless%2C%20rabbi%20authorities%20decreed%20that,to%20reliably%20calculate%20the%20calendar. For reasons relating to my having previously lived in Israel for an extended period of time, my personal views on the Orthodox rabbinate's unwillingness to reconsider the aforementioned outdated reasons for a practice that imposes significant hardship on observant Jews living and working outside of Israel, and my generally rebellious personality, I personally have continued to follow the Israel holiday calendar since returning to the United States years ago.